## FLEXIBILITY TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND INCREASE THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

In order to move forward with State and local reforms designed to improve academic achievement and increase the quality of instruction for all students in a manner that was not originally contemplated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), a State educational agency (SEA) may request flexibility, on its own behalf and on behalf of its LEAs, through waivers of ten provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements. In order to receive this flexibility, an SEA must meet the principles described in the next section. Terms that are defined in the Definitions section of this document are in bold type the first time they appear.

- 1. Flexibility Regarding the 2013–2014 Timeline for Determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): An SEA would no longer need to follow the procedures in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E) through (H) for setting annual measurable objectives (AMOs) to use in determining AYP. Instead, an SEA would have flexibility to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that will be used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and student subgroups.
- 2. Flexibility in Implementation of School Improvement Requirements: An LEA would no longer be required to comply with the requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, its Title I schools that fail, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and neither the LEA nor its schools would be required to take currently required improvement actions; however, an SEA may still require or permit an LEA to take such actions. An LEA would also be exempt from all administrative and reporting requirements related to school improvement under current law.
- 3. Flexibility in Implementation of LEA Improvement Requirements: An SEA would no longer be required to comply with the requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and neither the LEA nor the SEA would be required to take currently required improvement actions. An LEA would also be exempt from all associated administrative and reporting requirements related to LEA improvement under current law.
- 4. <u>Flexibility for Rural LEAs</u>: An LEA that receives Small, Rural School Achievement Program funds or Rural and Low-Income School Program funds would have flexibility under ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) to use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of the LEA's AYP status.
- 5. <u>Flexibility for Schoolwide Programs</u>: An LEA would have flexibility to operate a schoolwide program in a Title I school that does not meet the 40 percent poverty threshold in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) if the SEA has identified the school as a **priority**

**school** or a **focus school**, and the LEA is implementing interventions consistent with the **turnaround principles** or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in the school, as appropriate.

- 6. <u>Flexibility to Support School Improvement</u>: An SEA would have flexibility to allocate ESEA section 1003(a) funds to an LEA in order to serve any priority or focus school, if the SEA determines such schools are most in need of additional support.
- 7. <u>Flexibility for Reward Schools</u>: An SEA would have flexibility to use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) to provide financial rewards to any **reward school**, if the SEA determines such schools are most appropriate for financial rewards.
- 8. Flexibility Regarding Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) Improvement Plans: An LEA that does not meet its HQT targets would no longer have to develop an improvement plan under ESEA section 2141 and would have flexibility in how it uses its Title I and Title II funds. An SEA would be exempt from the requirements regarding its role in the implementation of these plans, including the requirement that it enter into agreements with LEAs on the uses of funds and the requirement that it provide technical assistance to LEAs on their plan. This flexibility would allow SEAs and LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems. An SEA would not be exempt from the requirement of ESEA section 1111(b)(8)(C) that it ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers; however, once more meaningful evaluation and support systems are in place in accordance with principle 3 (described below), an SEA may use the results of such systems to meet that requirement.
- 9. <u>Flexibility to Transfer Certain Funds</u>: An SEA and its LEAs would have flexibility to transfer up to 100 percent of the funds received under the authorized programs designated in ESEA section 6123 among those programs and into Title I, Part A. Moreover, to minimize burden at the State and local levels, the SEA would not be required to notify the Department and its participating LEAs would not be required to notify the SEA prior to transferring funds.
- 10. <u>Flexibility to Use School Improvement Grant (SIG) Funds to Support Priority Schools</u>: An SEA would have flexibility to award SIG funds available under ESEA section 1003(g) to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any priority school.